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# Understanding the Moscow Patriarchate: Why ROCOR's Fate is Doomed for Ecumenism

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**By Subdeacon Nektarios, M.A.**

## Introduction

Within American Orthodoxy, people often lack a sufficient understanding of who their episcopal hierarchs are and how their own jurisdictions are organizationally structured. This misunderstanding and confusion exist largely within World Orthodoxy because many have been indoctrinated with the idea that as long as one has a “traditionalist priest,” it makes no difference who the bishop is or what activities he may be continually involved in at the hierarchical level.



Met. Anthony (DEC) Praying with Pope

This phenomenon, which is a new, heretical ecclesiology taking root within World Orthodoxy and especially among those in the “Resist from Within” movement, can be aptly described as “Orthodox Presbyterianism.” This view claims that the elders or presbyters are now responsible for running the Church, rather than the episcopate. According to many circles within World Orthodoxy, the episcopate has entirely fallen into the pan-heresy of ecumenism, but since they have not been “officially condemned” by an Ecumenical Council, it is believed they cannot be separated from. Among the World Orthodox jurisdictions that have succumbed to this lack of organizational understanding and have also adopted the rising ecclesiological heresy of the “Resist from Within” movement, is the Russian Orthodox

Church Outside of Russia – Moscow Patriarchate (ROCOR-MP). This is largely due to ROCOR’s former reputation as a Church of Orthodox Confessors, who once stood for True Orthodoxy during their golden era from 1964 to 2001.

Today, however, ROCOR-MP is largely supported by a legacy they no longer live up to, their partial stand against COVIDism during the pandemic, and the continued promotion by historically uninformed “Orthobros” operating within their microcosm of influence on YouTube, promulgating these false narratives.

Many within ROCOR-MP believe that their jurisdiction is entirely independent of the Patriarchate of Moscow, and that any actions taken by the Patriarch of Moscow, its Patriarchal Synod, or its Department of External Church Relations (DECR) have no bearing on ROCOR-MP. They also believe that synodal decisions of the Moscow Patriarchate are not binding on ROCOR-MP. However, this could not be further from the truth.

### **2007 Act of Canonical Communion**

The first thing that members of ROCOR-MP should carefully review is the *2007 Act of Canonical Communion*, signed by Metropolitan Laurus of the Russian Church Abroad and representatives of the Moscow Patriarchate. In this officially ratified document, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia formally submits itself to the highest authority of the Moscow Patriarchate and agrees to revoke all previous documents that contradict this union, including the 1983 Anathema Against Ecumenism. As a result, both the Moscow Patriarchate and the newly incorporated ROCOR-MP now fall under the implications of that anathema. The Act of Canonical Communion reads in full as follows:

We, the humble Alexy II, by God's mercy Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia, jointly with the Eminent Members of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate, having gathered at a meeting of the Holy Synod on 3 / 16 May 2007 in the God-preserved city of Moscow; and the humble Laurus, Metropolitan of Eastern America and New York, First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, jointly with the Eminent Bishops, Members of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, having gathered at a meeting on 5 / 18 April 2007 in the God-preserved city of New York;

Being guided by the effort towards reestablishing blessed peace, Divinely-decreed love, and brotherly unity in the common work in the harvest-fields of God within the Fullness of the Russian Orthodox Church and her faithful in the Fatherland and abroad, taking into consideration the ecclesiastical life of the Russian diaspora outside the canonical borders of the Moscow Patriarchate, as dictated by history;

Taking into account that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia performs its service on the territories of many nations;

#### **By this Act declare:**

1. That the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, conducting its salvific service in the dioceses, parishes, monasteries, brotherhoods, and other ecclesiastical bodies that were formed through history, remains an indissoluble, self-governing part of the Local Russian Orthodox Church.
2. That the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia is independent in pastoral, educational, administrative, management, property, and civil matters, existing at the same time in canonical unity with the Fullness of the Russian Orthodox Church.
3. The supreme ecclesiastical, legislative, administrative, judicial and controlling authority in the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia is her Council of Bishops, convened by her Primate (First Hierarch), in accordance with the Regulations [Polozeniye] of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia.
4. The First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia is elected by her Council of Bishops. This election is confirmed, in accordance with the norms of Canon Law, by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.

5. The name of the Primate of the Russian Orthodox Church and the name of the First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are commemorated during divine services in all churches of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia before the name of the ruling bishop in the prescribed order.

6. Decisions on the establishment or liquidation of dioceses of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are made by her Council of Bishops in agreement with the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.

7. The bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are elected by her Council of Bishops or, in cases foreseen by the Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, by the Synod of Bishops. Such elections are confirmed in accordance with canonical norms by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church.

8. The bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are members of the Local Council [Pomestny Sobor] and Council of Bishops [Arkhiereiskij Sobor] of the Russian Orthodox Church and also participate in the meetings of the Holy Synod in the prescribed order. Representatives of the clergy and laity of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia participate in the Local Council of the Russian Orthodox Church in the established manner.

9. The supreme instances of ecclesiastical authority for the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are the Local Council and the Council of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church.

10. Decisions of the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church extend to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia with consideration of the particularities described by the present Act, by the Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia and by the legislation of the nations in which she performs her ministry.

11. Appeals on decisions of the supreme ecclesiastical court of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia are directed to the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

12. Amendments to the Regulations of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia by her supreme legislative authority are subject to the confirmation of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church in such case as these changes bear a canonical character.

13. The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia receives her holy myrrh from the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

By this Act, canonical communion within the Local Russian Orthodox Church is hereby restored.

*Acts issued previously which preclude the fullness of canonical communion are hereby deemed invalid or obsolete.*

The reestablishment of canonical communion will serve, God willing, towards the strengthening of the unity of the Church of Christ, of her witness in the contemporary world, promoting the fulfillment of the will of the Lord to “gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad” (John 11:52).

Let us bring thanks to All-Merciful God, Who through His omnipotent hand directed us to the path of healing the wounds of division and led us to the desired unity of the Russian Church in the homeland and abroad, to the glory of His Holy Name and to the good of His Holy Church and Her faithful flock. Through the prayers of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, may the Lord grant His blessing to the One Russian Church and Her flock both in the fatherland and in the diaspora.

+ Aleksei, Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia  
+ Lavra, Metropolitan of Eastern-America and New York,  
President of the Synod of Bishops of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia

In the city of Moscow on the day of the Ascension of the Lord 4/17 May 2007 [1].

As we can see in this document, the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, with the signing of this union, becomes fully subordinate to any and all major decisions of the Moscow Patriarchate, and only retains its status as a self-governing church in terms of administration and pastoral duties. From this Act, we can see that points 4, 6, 9, and 10 specifically relegate the ROCOR-MP to canonical subjugation under the Moscow Patriarchate. Point 10 of this *Act of Canonical Union* makes this point unmistakably clear by stating that all decisions of the Moscow Patriarchate are binding on the ROCOR-MP [2].

### **The Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church**

Within the structure of the Russian Orthodox Church, the relationship of ROCOR to the Moscow Patriarchate is defined not only by the *Act of Canonical Communion*, but also by the *Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church*. In this foundational document of the Moscow Patriarchate, the position of ROCOR-MP is clearly outlined within the broader organizational framework of the Russian Orthodox Church. This is made especially clear in Chapter XII, titled “The Self-Governing Churches,” which states:

1. The Self-governing Churches, which are parts of the Moscow Patriarchate, shall exercise their activities on the basis and within the limits determined by the Patriarchal Tomos issued in accordance with the decisions of the Local or Bishops' Council.
2. The decision on the establishment or abolishment of the Self-governing Church and on its territorial boundaries shall be taken by the Bishops' Council.
3. The Council and the Synod headed by the Primate of the Self-governing Church in the rank of metropolitan or archbishop shall be the bodies of the church authority and governance of the Self-governing Church.
4. The Primate of the Self-governing Church shall be elected by the Council from among the candidates approved by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.
5. The Primate shall take office after the approval by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
6. The Primate shall be the diocesan bishop of his diocese and shall head the Self-governing Church on the basis of the canons, the present Statute and the Statute of the Self-governing Church.
7. The name of the Primate shall be commemorated in all churches of the Self-governing Church after the name of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.
8. The decisions on the establishment or abolishment of the dioceses making up the Self-governing Church and on their territorial boundaries shall be taken by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod upon the presentation from the Synod of the Self-governing Church with the subsequent approval by the Bishops' Council.

9. The bishops of the Self-governing Church shall be elected by the Synod from among the candidates approved by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod.

10. The Bishops of the Self-governing Church shall be members of the Local and Bishops' Councils and shall take part in their proceedings in accordance with Sections II and III of the present Statute, as well as in the sessions of the Holy Synod.

11. The decisions of the Local and Bishops' Councils and the Holy Synod shall be binding for the Self-governing Churches.

12. The Supreme Ecclesiastical Court and the Court of the Bishops' Council shall be the ecclesiastical courts of last resort for the Self-governing Church.

13. The Council of the Self-governing Church shall adopt the Statute regulating the governance of this Church on the basis of the Patriarchal Tomos and within the limits provided by it. The Statute shall be subject to approval by the Holy Synod and to confirmation by the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

14. The Council and the Synod of the Self-governing Church shall act within the limits determined by the Patriarchal Tomos, the present Statute and the Statute regulating the governance of the Self-governing Church.

15. The Self-governing Church shall receive the Holy Chrism from the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia.

16. The Self-governing Churches shall be:

- The Latvian Orthodox Church;
- The Orthodox Church of Moldova;
- The Estonian Orthodox Church.

17. The Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia with all its historically established dioceses, parishes and other church institutions shall be a self-governing part of the Russian Orthodox Church.

The norms of the present Statute shall be applied in it with consideration for the Act of Canonical Communion of the 17th of May 2007, as well as for the Regulations on the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia with the amendments and alterations made by the Council of Bishops of the Russian Church Outside of Russia on the 13th of May 2008 [3].

In the *Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church*, it is clear from points 8, 11, and 17 that ROCOR is subject to all decisions made by the Patriarchal Synod of Moscow. As stated in XII.11 of the Statute, "The decisions of the Local and Bishops' Councils and the Holy Synod shall be binding for the Self-governing Churches" [4]. Therefore, any and all decisions of the Moscow Patriarchate are binding on both the hierarchy and the laity of ROCOR. This includes all decisions made by the Moscow Patriarchate regarding its participation in the pan-heresy of ecumenism, as well as all joint agreements and ecumenical statements that have been or will be signed by the Moscow Patriarchate.

At the same time, any decisions made by the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia prior to the *2007 Act of Canonical Communion* are null and void. This includes all of ROCOR's decrees against the pan-heresy of Ecumenism, Sergianism, and the New Calendar, since any authority those decrees once held would now also condemn the Patriarchate to which ROCOR has submitted itself.

Now that we have reviewed the governing documents of the Russian Orthodox Church and examined how they fully apply to the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, we must turn our attention to the Department for External Church Relations (DECR) of the Russian Orthodox Church. It is important to understand what this department is within the Moscow Patriarchate, how its activities and any agreements or statements issued by it are officially sanctioned and endorsed by the Patriarchal Synod, and how these decisions and activities equally apply to ROCOR-MP, as demonstrated in all the primary source documents of the Russian Orthodox Church.

According to the website of the DECR, this department was created on April 4th, 1946. It is the oldest institution within the Moscow Patriarchate and functions as an executive body under the Patriarch of Moscow and the Patriarchal Synod. The same source states that “Its status and tasks are defined by the Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Statute of the Department. The Department is accountable to His Holiness the Patriarch and the Holy Synod, which annually approve the program of its activities.” It also confirms that the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, is a “permanent member of the Holy Synod” of the Moscow Patriarchate [5].

In the *Statute of the Russian Orthodox Church*, "Chapter VIII. The Moscow Patriarchate and the Synodal Institutions," it describes the institutional role of the DECR as having the sole right to officially represent and act on behalf of the Patriarch of Moscow and the Patriarchal Synod of the Moscow Patriarchate. In this primary source document of the Russian Orthodox Church it explicitly states:

The Moscow Patriarchate and the Synodal institutions shall have an exceptional right to be plenipotentiary representatives of the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod within the scope of their activities and their competence [6].

The sentence means that the Moscow Patriarchate and its Synodal institutions have a unique and exclusive authority to act on behalf of both the Patriarch of Moscow and All Russia and the Holy Synod. These bodies are described as “plenipotentiary representatives,” a term that means they have full power to carry out decisions and represent the authority of those who appoint them—in this case, the highest governing bodies of the Church. In practical terms, this means that when these institutions act, speak, or issue statements, they do so with the full backing and authority of the Patriarch and the Synod. For example, when Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, as the chairman of the Department for External Church Relations, issues a statement, signs an ecumenical agreement, or participates in interfaith activities, he does so not merely as an individual bishop but as the authorized representative of the entire Moscow Patriarchate. His actions, like those of any Synodal institution, are binding and officially recognized as the will of the central leadership of the Russian Orthodox Church, including all affiliated jurisdictions such as ROCOR-MP.

Now these very *Statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church* are indeed problematic for those in the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia both clergy and laity because in real world practice it has completely neutered the ROCOR-MP synod from rejecting publicly any participation in the heresy of Ecumenism by any clergymen of the Moscow Patriarchate because of the very activities that are officially sanctioned by the Patriarch of Moscow and the Holy Synod.

A recent example illustrating how the Moscow Patriarchate's officially sanctioned ecumenism directly implicates ROCOR-MP can be seen in the highly publicized interfaith event that took place in Rome under the leadership of Pope Leo XIV and the Roman Catholic Church on October 28th, 2025. During this gathering, representatives of multiple non-Christian religions, including Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, and Hinduism, joined together with Roman Catholic clergy, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, the DECR Chairman and Official Representative to the Moscow Patriarchate, along with the Greek Orthodox Patriarch of Alexandria and other Orthodox bishops from unknown jurisdictions in a joint worship service with the Pope of Rome, where they prayed the Our Father and read from other religious texts, in the presence of Protestant Female LGBTQ Pastors [7].

These religious figures did not simply observe one another from a respectful distance. They participated in an orchestrated act of simultaneous and mutual prayer, publicly presenting a united spiritual front. This participation, regardless of intention, is strictly condemned by the Holy Canons and by the witness of the Fathers, who forbid any form of joint prayer or liturgical expression with heretics or non-Christians. Yet this event proceeded without any public objection from the Synod of ROCOR-MP, because all such activities are sanctioned and carried out through the Department for External Church Relations, whose actions are binding on every bishop, priest, and parish under the authority of the Moscow Patriarchate.

This event was not an isolated occurrence, but a continuation of a long-standing pattern within the Moscow Patriarchate, a pattern that now also includes ROCOR-MP. The silence of ROCOR-MP in the face of such ecumenical activity is not accidental and cannot be attributed to ignorance. It is the direct result of the *2007 Act of Canonical Communion* and the *Statutes of the Russian Orthodox Church*, both of which require complete submission to the decisions of the Patriarch and the Holy Synod. As long as ROCOR-MP remains under this structure, it cannot denounce or resist the pan-heresy of ecumenism and is therefore fully complicit in it. This is a sobering reality for anyone who wishes to claim the name of true Orthodoxy while remaining within the jurisdiction of the Moscow Patriarchate.

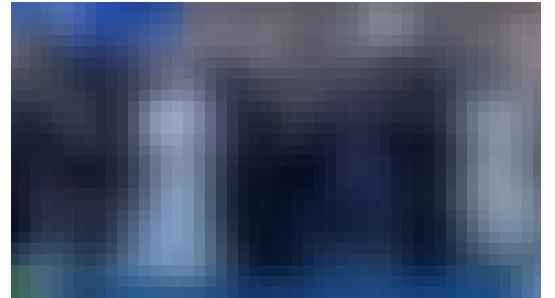
What is not only continually problematic but also deeply ironic is that many clergy and laity within ROCOR-MP regularly preach against the Pope, Roman Catholicism, Ecumenism, and other heretical religions, while their own bishops at the highest levels of the Moscow Patriarchate are actively engaged in joint prayers, ecumenical worship services, interfaith dialogues, ongoing ecumenical conferences, joint statements of cooperation, and photographed encounters with leaders of false religions, all of which are shared openly on official church websites and social media platforms.

For example, in a video created by Moses McPherson, one of ROCOR-MP's influential but false-teaching YouTube gurus, he rates the Antichrist characteristics of the arch-heretic of Rome, Pope Leo XIV [8]. In the video, he lists several reasons why this pseudo-bishop of Rome displays traits linked to the Antichrist, presenting himself as a defender of Orthodoxy against perceived heretical threats. McPherson uses this content to reinforce his claim that Pope Leo XIV fulfills prophecies and patristic warnings about the coming of the Antichrist. His audience is invited to believe that the Pope is not merely in error but represents a spiritual danger to all of Christendom, including the Orthodox faithful.

Yet what is truly ironic is that only a few months later, Metropolitan Anthony of Volokolamsk, representing the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations, along with hierarchs from the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Alexandria, were shown praying and worshipping with that same Pope. This joint prayer service included not only the Pope but also religious leaders from various non-Christian traditions. The event was presented as an effort toward interfaith cooperation, even though such gatherings have been historically condemned by Orthodox canonical tradition. Despite this, the Moscow Patriarchate gave visible approval to the gathering through the presence of its official representative.

This creates a clear contradiction in McPherson's position. He claims to expose the Pope as the Antichrist, yet he remains in full liturgical and ecclesial communion with a patriarchate that openly prays with this supposed Antichrist figure. By commemorating the Moscow Patriarch and maintaining allegiance to ROCOR-MP, he is logically admitting that he is in communion with the very one he condemns as an enemy of Christ. The inconsistency reveals a deep flaw in his approach, for it shows a willingness to condemn heresy in words while remaining complicit in deeds. According to the Church Fathers, this type of compromised communion would never be tolerated, as it undermines the witness of the faith itself.

In light of all the evidence presented, it is undeniable that the Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia, since its submission to the Moscow Patriarchate in 2007, no longer functions as an independent witness to true Orthodoxy, but rather as a subordinate extension of the Moscow Patriarchates' deep entanglement in the pan-heresy of ecumenism. The governing documents of the Russian Orthodox Church, together with the public actions of the Department for External Church Relations, reveal that ROCOR-MP is bound to the decisions and spiritual direction of leaders who openly participate in joint prayers, interfaith services, and ecumenical collaborations that directly violate the Holy Canons and the unanimous witness of the Orthodox Fathers.



Patriarch of Alexandria & Metropolitan Anthony  
(DECR) with the Pope

The continued silence and cooperation of ROCOR-MP in the face of these betrayals is not a tragic accident, but the predictable result of a jurisdiction that has surrendered its voice, its freedom, and its confessional identity. Those who still claim that ROCOR-MP stands for the Orthodox faith of the martyrs and confessors must now face the sober truth that the idea of “resisting from within” was never a viable path of witness, but an ecclesiological delusion that has only served to justify communion with heresy. The only faithful response is separation from the apostasy of Moscow and from every other so-called “official Patriarchate” that is a member of the World Council of Churches and openly practices the heresy of ecumenism. Only by returning to the uncompromising ecclesiology of the Holy Fathers, who taught that there can be no communion with heresy and no unity without truth, can one truly remain in the Church of Christ.

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[2]. Ibid.

[3]. “XII. The Self-governing Churches,” The Russian Orthodox Church – The Department for External Church Relations – Russian Orthodox Church, accessed November 3rd, 2025, <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/92098-xii-the-self-governing-churches/>

[4]. Ibid.

[5]. “Department,” Department for External Church Relations – Russian Orthodox Church, accessed November 3rd, 2025, <https://mospat.ru/en/department/>

[6]. “VIII. The Moscow Patriarchate and the Synodal Institutions,” Department for External Church Relations – Russian Orthodox Church, accessed November 3rd, 2025, <https://mospat.ru/en/documents/92094-viii-the-moscow-patriarchate-and-the-synodal-institutions/>

[7]. “Pope Leo XIV: ‘Peace is holy, not war’,” Vatican News, accessed November 3rd, 2025, <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/pope/news/2025-10/pope-leo-xiv-peace-meeting-rome-colosseum-sant-egidio.html>

[8]. “Priest Ranks Antichrist Aura,” Father Moses McPherson Official YouTube Channel, accessed November 3rd, 2025, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=roy5TES0V2c>